



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

EL CANON PERDIDO

BY J. M. GUINN.

The stranger strolling through the city of Santa Barbara will be forcibly impressed by the Spanish nomenclature of its streets. The famous men of the Spanish and Mexican eras of California's history have been remembered in the naming of the highways and byways of the channel city. Sola, Victoria, Figueroa, Ortega, Carrillo, de La Guerra and many others have their streets. Nor alone have the famous men, but also famous and infamous deeds, too, have been immortalized in choice Castilian on the guide boards. Sandwiched in among the calles named for bygone heroes the stroller will find one street name that, if he is not up in his Spanish, will impress him with the unpleasant sensation as he reads its name,—Cañon Perdido,—that he has entered upon the broad road that leads down to perdition cañon; and he will be on the qui vive for some tradition of the days of the padres or the story of uncanny orgies held in some lonely cañon by the Indian worshipper of Chupu, the channel god. If he should ask some Barbareño what the street's name means, he will be informed that its name in English is "Lost Cannon street"—for cañon is California Spanish for a gun or a gulch, and perdido may mean in Castilian simply "lost" or intensified—doomed to eternal perdition. Of the deed, the legend or the tradition that gave the calle its queer appellation, unless your informant is an old-timer, you will learn but little and that little perhaps may be incorrect.

The episode that the street name commemorates occurred away back in the closing years of the first half of the nineteenth century. In the winter of 1847-48, the American brig *Elizabeth* was wrecked on the Santa Barbara coast. Among the flotsam of the wreck was a brass cannon of uncertain caliber—it might have been a six, a nine or a twelve-pounder. The capacity of its bore is unknown. Nor is it pertinent to my story for the gun unloaded made more commotion in Santa Barbara than it ever did when it belched forth shot and shell in battle.

The gun, after its rescue from a watery grave, lay for some time on the beach devoid of a carriage and useless apparently for offense or defense.

One dark night in the ides of March a little squad of native Californians, possessed of a caretta and armed with riatas, stole down to the beach and loaded the gun on the cart, and dragging it to the estero, hid it in the sands. What their purpose was in stealing the gun no one knows. Perhaps they did not know themselves. It might come handy in a revolution. Or maybe they only intended to play a joke on the gringos. Whatever their object, the outcome of their prank must have astonished them. The flag of our country had been bobbing around in California for a year or more, but the constitution had not yet arrived. The laws of the land were military regulations, Mexican bandos and the Recopilacion de Indias. This conglomerate jurisprudence was administered by American martinets, Mexican alcaldes and native California ayuntamientos.

There was a company of Stevenson's regiment of New York volunteers stationed at Santa Barbara under the command of a Captain Lippitt. Lippitt was a fussy, meddling martinet. He belonged to that class of men who always lose their heads in an emergency and make trouble for themselves and others. In the theft of the cannon he thought he had discovered a California revolution in its incipient stages and determined to crush it in its infancy. He sent post haste, at a cost of \$400 to the government, couriers bearing dispatches to Governor Mason at Monterey, informing him of the prospective uprising of the natives and the possible destruction of the troops at Santa Barbara by the terrible gun that the enemy had stolen.

It was Lippitt's duty to have reported the theft to Col. Stevenson at Los Angeles, to whose regiment he belonged. But he hoped by reporting direct to the military governor of the territory to obtain greater credit for his display of military genius and promptitude in suppressing insurrections.

Col. Mason, relying on Captain Lippitt's report, and determining to give the natives a lesson that would teach them not to meddle with guns or revolutions, issued the following order:

Order No. 36.

Headquarters of the 10th Military Department,
Monterey, California, May 31, 1848.

A gun belonging to the wreck of the Elisabeth has been stolen from the beach at Santa Barbara, and ample time having been allowed for its citizens to discover and produce said gun, it is ordered that the town be laid under a contribution of \$500, assessed in the following manner:

First, a capitation tax of \$2.00 on all males over 20 years of age; the balance to be paid by the heads of families and property holders in the proportion of the value of their respective real and personal estate in the town of Santa Barbara and vicinity.

Second, Col. J. D. Stevenson, commander of the Southern Military District, will direct the appraisement of property and the assessment of the contribution, and will repair to Santa Barbara on or before the 25th of June next, when, if the missing gun is not produced, he will cause said contribution to be paid before July 1st. When the whole is collected he will turn it over to the acting Assistant Quartermaster of the post to be held for further orders.

Third, Should any person fail to pay his capitation, enough of his property will be seized and sold at public auction to realize the amount of the contribution due by him and the cost of sale.

By order of Colonel R. B. Mason.

WM. T. SHERMAN,
First. Lieut. 3rd Art. & A. A. Adj.-General.

The order was translated into Spanish and promulgated in Santa Barbara.

Then there was indignation in the old pueblo, and curses, not loud, but deep and withering in their bitterness, against the perfidious gringos. To be taxed for a cannon used in their own subjugation was bad enough, but to be charged with stealing it was an insult too grievous to be borne, and the loudest in their wail were the old-time American born residents of the town. Had not their New England ancestors gone to war with the mother country because of "taxation without representation?" and put British tea to steep in Boston harbor without the consent of its owners? And here on the western side of the continent they were confronted with that odious principle. Why should they be taxed? They had not a single representative among the cannon thieves.

Col. Stevenson ordered Lippitt to make out a roll of those subject to assessment. This order was issued June 15, and the Colonel left Los Angeles for Santa Barbara, arriving there June 23d. Immediately on his arrival he held an interview with Don Pablo de La Guerra, one of the most distinguished citizens of Santa Barbara, and a man highly respected by both the natives and the Americans.

Colonel Stevenson expressed his regret at the ridiculous course of Captain Lippitt. Don Pablo was very indignant at

the treatment of the citizens and expressed his fear that the enforcement of the assessment might result in an outbreak. After talking the matter over with Col. Stevenson, he became somewhat mollified, and asked the Colonel to make Santa Barbara his headquarters. He inquired about the brass band at Colonel Stevenson's headquarters and suggested that the Californians were very fond of music. Stevenson took the hint and sent for his band. The band arrived at Carpinteria on the afternoon of the 3d of July. The 4th had been fixed upon as the day for the payment of the fines, doubtless with the idea of giving the Californians a lesson in American patriotism and fair dealing. Colonel Stevenson met the leader of the band and arranged with him to serenade Don Pablo and his family with all the Spanish airs in the band's repertoire. The musicians stole quietly into town after night, reached the de La Guerra house and broke the stillness of the night with their best Spanish airs. The effect was magical. The family, who were at supper, rushed out as if a temblor had broken loose. Don Pablo was so delighted that he shed tears and hugged Colonel Stevenson in the most approved California style. The band serenaded all the dons of note in the old pueblo and tooted until long after midnight. Then started in next morning and kept it up until 10 o'clock, the hour set for each man to contribute his dos pesos to the common fund. By that time every hombre on the list was so filled with patriotism, wine and music that the greater portion of the fine was handed over without protest.

Don Pablo insisted that Colonel Stevenson should deliver a Fourth of July oration, all the same as they do in the United States of the North. So Stevenson orated and Stephen C. Foster translated it into Spanish. The day closed with a grand ball. The beauty and chivalry of Santa Barbara danced to the music of a gringo brass band and the brass cannon was forgotten for a time. But the memory of the city's ransom rankled and although an American band played Spanish airs, 'American injustice was still remembered. When the city's survey was made in 1850 the nomenclature of three streets kept the cañon episode green in the memory of the Barbareños,—Cañon Perdido (Lost Cannon street), Quinientos (Five Hundred street), and Mason street. It is needless to say that this last was not a favorite thoroughfare nor a very prominent one.

When the pueblo by legislative act blossomed into a ciudad, it became necessary to have a city seal. The municipal fathers pondered long over a design, and finally evolved this strange

device. In the center a cannon emblazoned, encircled with these word "Vale Qui-ni-entos Pesos"—"worth five hundred dollars." Or if you choose to give a Latin twist to the vale on the seal, it might mean, "Good-bye; five hundred dollars," which is the better interpretation, as the sequel to the story will show.

This seal was used from the incorporation of the city in 1850 to 1860, when another design was chosen.

After peace was declared, Colonel Mason sent the five hundred dollars to the Prefect of Santa Barbara, with instructions to use it in building a city jail. And although there was pressing need for a jail, no jail was built. The Prefect's needs were pressing, too. The City Council, after a lapse of four or five years, demanded that he should turn the money into the city treasury, but he replied that the money had been entrusted to him for a specific purpose, and he would trust no city treasury with it. Then the City Council instructed the District Attorney to begin legal proceedings against the ex-Prefect to recover the money. As the Judge of Santa Barbara was a relative of the ex-Prefect, the suit was transferred to San Francisco. The papers in the case were unaccountably lost and the trustee of the fund died insolvent. No new suit was ever begun, so it was indeed, Vale (farewell), five hundred dollars.

Ten years passed and the episode of the lost cannon was but the dimly remembered story of the olden time. The old gun reposed peacefully in its grave of sand, and those who had buried it there had forgotten the place of its interment. They had not dared to reveal the place where it was hid at the time when Mason stood up the city and compelled it to deliver, lest the gringo comandante in his wrath should stand them up before an adobe wall and shoot them full of holes. When peace came and the constitution had arrived to keep company with the flag, the shifting of the sands had so changed the contour of the beach that they could not locate the hidden gun.

One stormy night in December, 1858, the estero cut a new channel to the ocean. In the morning as some Barbareños were surveying the changes caused by the flood they saw the muzzle of a large gun protruding from the cut in the bank. They unearthed it, cleaned off the sand and discovered that it was El Cañon Perdido—the lost cannon. They loaded it on a cart and hauled it up State street to de La Guerra, where they mounted it on an improvised gun carriage and held a jubilation over it. But the sight of it was a reminder to the Barbareños of an unpleasant incident, and as the finders, claiming to be keepers, de-

manded the gun, it was adjudged to belong to them. They sold it to a merchant for \$80. He shipped it to San Francisco and sold it at a handsome profit for old brass. And then it was Vale (farewell) Cañon Perdido!

The names of the five men who buried the gun were José Garcia, José Antonio de La Guerra, José Lugo, José Dolores Garcia and Pacifico Cota.

It was currently reported that the Prefect, believing that Santa Barbara deserved a handsomer and more commodious jail than \$500 would build, risked the whole amount of the military contribution on a card in a game of monte, hoping to double it and thus benefit the city, but luck was against him, and the dealer, with no patriotism in his soul, refusing to return it, raked the coin into his coffers; and the municipality had to worry along several years without a jail.

Such is the true story of how Calle del Cañon Perdido—the Street of the Lost Cannon—came by its queer name.